Fire Environment Statement

NW MN Blow Down Fuels and Spring Fire Season Alignment

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Subject: Large areas of concentrated slash fuels align with typical peak spring fire environment conditions.

Discussion: A large area of slash fuels resulted from a derecho blow down event during June of 2025. These fuels have cured from droughty conditions throughout the summer and fall of 2025. MN typically has a pronounced period of fire activity due to increase fire potential due to widely available fine dead fuels and favorable fire weather. The addition of slash fuels increases fire potential to resist containment and adds significant complexity to suppression operations.

Difference from Normal Conditions:

- Modeled fire behavior estimates show an expected **2 - 4 times** increase in fire behavior from pre-blowdown conditions.
- Red needles and fine dead woody fuels may lead to increased intensity and rates of spread beyond modeled estimates.
- Fuels conditions have changed in the blowdown areas from predominantly timber fuels to 1/3 to 2/3 slash fuels.
- Alignment with typical spring fire fuels and fire weather will increase fire potential in and around areas of blow down through.
    - Decreased fine dead fuels moistures (FDFM)
    - Higher probabilities of ignition (PIG)
    - More receptive fuel beds
    - Greater spotting potential
    - Faster rates of spread (ROS)
    - Greater resistance to containment
    - Increase mop up and monitoring

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- The majority of the blowdown occurred in proximity to heavily populated areas, and fires within the wildland urban interface (WUI) are a significant concern.
- Long-term exposure to high levels of heat may result in increased damage to structures and infrastructure where fires occur.
- Pockets of extremely heavy fuel loading will increase fire behavior, ground resource travel time, suppression difficulty, response urgency, and hazardous working conditions on fire lines.
- Subsurface fire potential exists with the long-term dry conditions. Expect longer, hotter and deeper burning to increase suppression workload and resistance to control.
- Long-term dryness may result in burned debris piles retaining heat and leading to unintended wildfires when fire danger increases.

Mitigation Measures:

- **Public Awareness** – Increase messaging as short-term weather conditions align with long-term fuel and drought concerns.
- **Preparedness** – Increase staffing and availably of heavy equipment suited to working in heavy slash fuels.
- **Restrictions** – Limit burning permits for debris burning when conditions warrant.

Area of Concern: Wind damaged trees were observed along the U.S. Highway 2 corridor ranging west of the City of Bemidji to east of the City of Cass Lake, including portions of the Leach Lake Reservation, and the Chippewa National Forest.

Figure 1 Location of Wind Damaged Fuels and Areas of Interest Used in Change from Normal Analysis

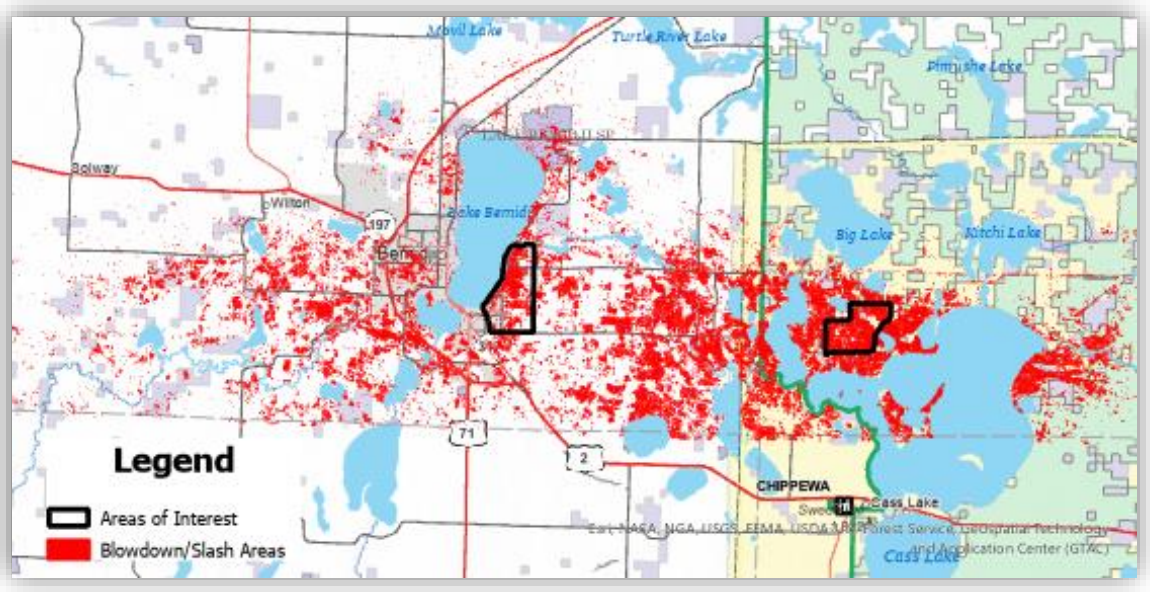
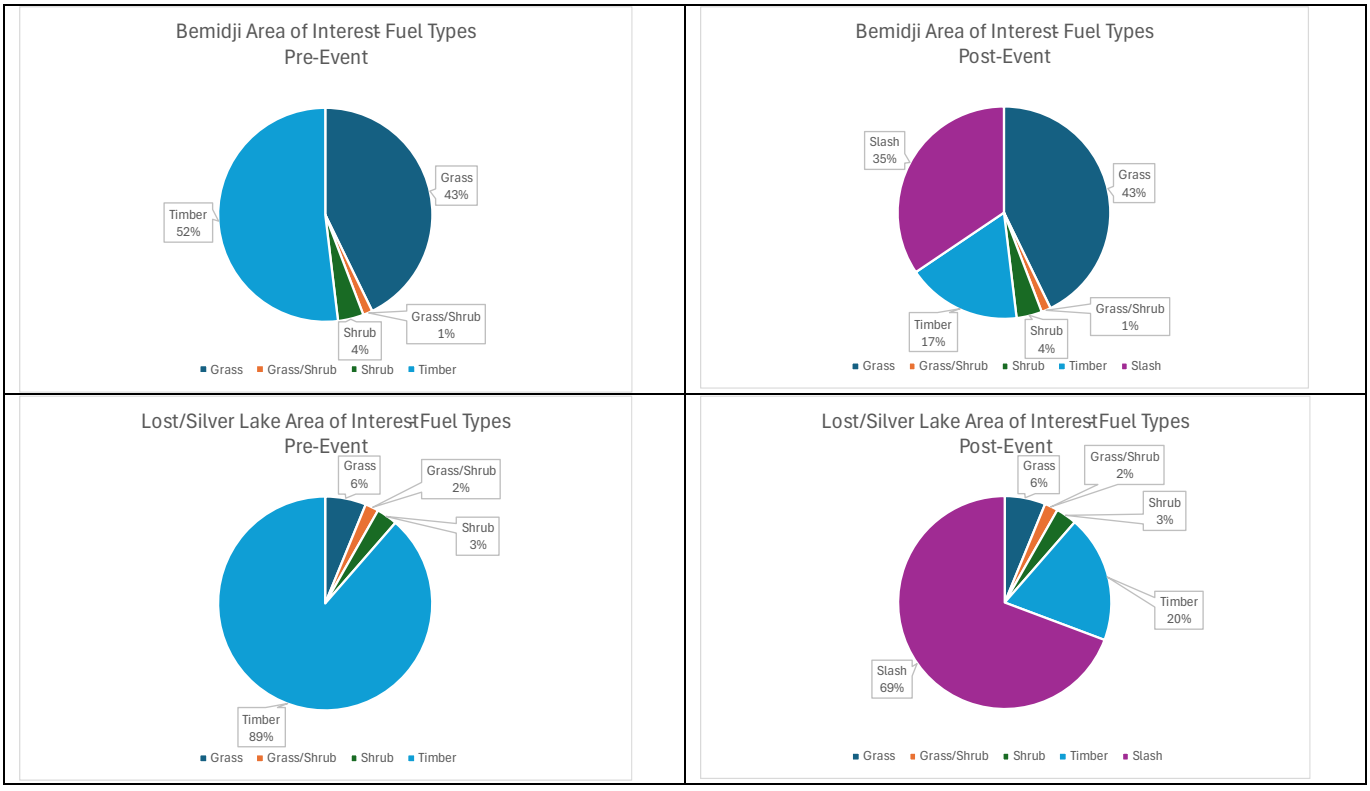


Figure 2 Change from Normal for Areas of Interest



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